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Book Review of Families, Physicians and Children with Special Health Needs (Rosalyn Benjamin Darling & Margo I. Peter, eds.)

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Erratum

The citation for this review is 8 *RISK* 91 (1997) in most commercial databases.

Families, Physicians, and Children with Special Health Needs (Rosalyn Benjamin Darling & Margo I. Peter, eds., Auburn House 1994) About the authors and contributors, foreword, index, preface, resource list. ISBN 0-86569-226-2. [206 pp. Cloth \$49.95. 88 Post Road West, Westport CT 06881.]

True to its title, this book concerns the relationship between physicians and families having children with special needs. It is a collection of essays by participants in a national conference held in May 1992. Views represented include those of physicians, early intervention professionals, professionals with backgrounds in education, psychology and sociology, and parents. Each chapter stresses the need for greater parent-professional partnerships through greater interaction. All essays find greater communication between parents and professionals to be necessary but strongly state that more is required. It is said that, as experts concerning their children, parents of special needs children should actively participate in a truly collaborative way with professionals.

Most centrally, however, all contributors emphasize that *families* with special needs children have special needs themselves. Such families experience greater frustration and expend greater energy on what are routine for other families and need greater understanding because of these added burdens. A unifying theme is that the traditional approach of clinical medicine, focusing primarily on the patient's presenting problem, is inappropriate because family needs go beyond the child's problem. Medical professionals must learn to use an approach that takes into account total family needs.

It is suggested that medical students, pediatric residents and currently practicing physicians each receive specific training to facilitate being more sensitive to the total needs of these families. Several education models are presented. Chapter 5, *A First-year Medical Student Curriculum about Family Views of Chronic and Disabling Conditions*, suggests including a clinical course for first year medical students. Chapter 7, *Graduate Medical Education in Pediatrics: Preparing Reliable Allies for Parents of Children with Special Health Care Needs*, would have residents provide respite care for a family who has a child with a disability or chronic illness during pediatric

rotations. Chapter 9, *Overcoming Obstacles to Early Intervention Referral: The Development of a Video-based Training Model for Community Physicians*, deals with training already practicing physicians through video.

While these families' need for special care and consideration may seem obvious, often the obvious needs to be stated to gain the attention that it deserves. However, acknowledging the needs of these families could have been more appropriately accomplished in another venue. The book was repetitive; this reviewer found it difficult to maintain interest after reading similar material several times. A journal article could have more succinctly presented this material and, at the same time, allowed the authors' calls for greater sensitivity to be heard by many more.

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